

Colorado NRCS Leadership Team Meeting Minutes September 12-13, 2006

Attendees:

John Andrews	Roy Hall	Frank Riggle
Ila Binard	Callie Hendrickson	Haydee Thilled
Jeff Burwell	John Knapp	Petra Walker
Tim Carney	Dan Lynn	Cathee Wilson
David Doty	Kelli McClelland	Dale Woodbury
Mike Gillespie	Steve Park	
Allen Green	Mike Rich	

Notetaker: Debbie Kanatzar

(Note: Each presenter provided handouts and/or presentations.)

September 12 – Facilitator – Cathee Wilson

Allen G. – Opening Comments and Open Discussion:

- Fiscal Year Wrap-up:
 - Effort to rebuild our workforce.
 - Budget:
 - Anticipate tight budget years in 2007 and 2008
 - We have worked the last two years to prepare for this by:
 - ✓ Prepaying agreements (technicians, biologists, etc.).
 - ✓ Purchasing equipment, vehicles, and computers.
 - We need to maximize the use of the Conservation District technician agreement.
 - We need to work to make sure the right technical staff is in the best locations.
 - We need to look at ways to streamline, reduce overhead, and administrative costs.
 - Staffing:
 - Programmatic wrap-up
- Budget Planning for FY07:
 - October 16 Blank Slate meeting with Allen, Randy and the ACs in Allen's office.
 - Blank Slate effort is being built on resource concerns and available staff.
 - Our goal is how we can provide the best technical and financial assistance to our producers.
 - October 17 is our Consolidating the Gains Business Plan Meeting held at the Holiday Inn at Denver West in Golden (see memorandum handed out).
- FY-06 Performance Reviews:
 - Realize that “fully successful” is a good rating and means the employee has done everything expected of that position. The majority of ratings should fall in this category.

Allen G. - Comments:

- Field offices need to focus on the most critical conservation work to be accomplished.
- Goals should to be used as a way to provide direction.
- The ACs need to look at the resources of concern and work towards those issues as goals.
- At the end of the year, we will send out a report of findings for each Area.
- Area Conservationists will have the option of individual goals or only Area wide goals.

Allen G. – Districts:

- Districts need the ability to step forward and we need to focus on:
 - Increasing their capacity.
 - Better leadership at the District Boards.
 - Receiving the credit they deserve as a local leadership body.

Callie H. – CACD Update:

- CACD asked for assistance from NRCS as advisors for reviewing and updating their Policy.
 - The Policy Book is not user friendly in its current format.
 - The CACD board is looking at making significant changes.
 - Meeting is scheduled on October 18 to work on the Policy Book in Frisco at the Holiday Inn.
 - The Committees goals are:
 - ✓ To draft the new Policy guidelines.
 - ✓ Focus on consistent formatting.
 - ✓ Each committee is to reword the policy.
 - Shane Briggs, CDOW, has volunteered to do research on all the wildlife policies in the handbook.
 - Committees and Chairs:
 - Forestry and Wildlife – John Taylor, Pagosa Springs
 - Land Use –Harley Ernst, Flagler
 - Rangeland – Bob Arambel, Holly
 - RC&D –Bob Miner, Palmer Lake
 - Urban – Julio Iturreria, Jefferson CD
 - Water - Mel Rettig, Grand Junction
 - Recommendations for NRCS Advisors that need to attend the October 18 meeting in Frisco, CO and the CACD Annual Meeting respective Committee Meetings.
 - Forestry and Wildlife – Greg Sundstrom (CSFS) and Shane Briggs (CDOW)
 - Land Use – Roy Hall and John Knapp

- Rangeland – Jeff Burwell
 - RC&D – Randy Randall and Wayne Jipsen
 - Urban – Gary Finstad and Mark Comcast
 - Water – Frank Riggle and John Andrews
 - There is also a need for assist in writing the policies.
- Watershed Tour Update
 - Tours have highlighted excellent on the ground conservation district work with partners

Jeff B. – ECS Update:

- Conservation Planning:
 - Environmental evaluations are incomplete or contain erroneous resource impact information.
 - Terri has provided training but offices still not filling out CPA-52s according to policy.
 - DCs are not following policy for review/approval of conservation plans.
- ECS Training opportunities for FY07:
 - Planning sessions will be posted on my.NRCS calendar and an ECS Training Course Syllabus will be located on the CO Homepage.
 - Training in FY06 received good reviews.
 - Cultural Resource training will be offered yearly and SHPO will be asked to provide parts of the training as either a new or refresher training.
- ECS will emphasize IWM, Nutrient Management and Pest Management Support to FOs
- Conservation Planning Sign-up - Discussion
 - Determine if the sign-up should be on a watershed basis or by county.
 - We need to manage the sign-up effectively.
 - Time it according to your own Area.
 - Conservation Technicians would be helpful in this effort.
 - High quality plans should result in better EQIP contracts and fewer modifications and allow DCs to manage programs more efficiently.
 - Announcement will be in the winter and the actual sign-up will be during field season.
 - It is advantageous for NRCS to provide tools to the landowner for them to realize what they need and what their resources of concern are, e.g. Self-Assessment and web soil survey; would help to cut the time down.

Frank R. – Water Management Update:

- NRI – Discussion and Decision
 - A concern this year with lower access permission than in the past.
 - Permissions have been a problem when the landowner finds out it will be a non-NRCS employee completing the sample.

- In a few cases, the landowners turn the contracted folks away.
 - Landowners prefer someone they know.
 - Personal contact with a landowner is the best method for obtaining access.
- Rapid Watershed Assessment Update (handout):
 - Profiles are available on the web.
 - Suggestions are welcome on how to give us a better product.
- There are a lot of the medium size CAFOs that need attention; however, most can be treated economically and efficiently.
- Outreach brochure (5,000) was developed and is being distributed at feed stores, veterinarians, etc.
- Salinity Course - Do we want to host again this year and do we have enough people to attend?

Consensus –AC's agreed to not host a course this year, but to wait until 2008.

Steve P. – Soils Update:

- Steve provided an update of the status of soil surveys in the State.
- Still working on getting Forest Service data.
- MLRA offices:
 - Verbal confirmation that the Chief has signed off on the offices.
 - Migration plan was submitted and the plan calls for all soil scientist to be in an office.
 - Steve provided a staffing outline to the LT.
 - Steve indicated that there were some voids for some tech soil services in the State and offered up proposals for staff coverage.
 - Staff will do more than update.
 - Team will be developed to prioritize the workload
 - Staffing decisions need to be made.

Tim C. – Programs Update:

- WRP – reverse bid auction easement acquisition pilot:
 - County easement cap.
 - Seven states selected for the pilot which included Colorado.
 - New - Yellow Book Policy – take the value of the entire tract of ground before the easement.
- Average Cost Share Incentives for program contracts in 2007 discussed – Management Incentive payment Options.
 - Talking points are being developed.
 - Simpler process for clients and staff.
- EQIP/WHIP National Ranking Tool
 - Proposed factors for the resource of concerns will be included in the ranking tool.

- Program Contract Modification Policy and Permissions:
 - Important to follow policy.
 - State program manager must approve mods over \$10,000
 - Contract item modifications for \$1,000/items can be done by the planners.
 - This effort moves the authority down as far as possible.

Ila B. – SAO Update:

- IT Security:
 - Ila needs the DCs help with new District employees.
 - Security training must be completed or employee loses their access.

John K. – Wellness Program Recommendations:

- Colorado wellness policy – recommendations:
 - Daily exercise time.
 - Discussion with DCs on wellness opportunities.
 - Offer training course:
 - Stress management
 - CPR
 - First Aid
 - Re emphasis the Employee Assistance Plan.
 - Emphasis cholesterol education.
 - Provide exercise equipment.
 - Consider the level of exercise for seniors on staff.

Dan L. – Tour Animas/LaPlata and Mancos RWA Project Areas:

Randy R. – ABC Training Update:

- Determined nationwide there are about 400 tasks total in ABC – of which about 150 are at the State office level.
- RC&D, Soil, Snow, NRI, and Plant Materials may not need to attend training.
 - Will hold a teleconference.
- The Quality Assurance for ABC will be as follows:
 - Level 1- ACs will validate practices.
 - Level 2 – Randy Randall, Mike Wall, and Debra Molinaro will verify all data is valid.
 - Level 3 – Allen Green will sign certifying data is correct when complete.
- State office training is scheduled for October 3 – 5 for all DCs.

Haydee T. – Area 3 Guest Report:

- Worked in Tennessee prior to Colorado.
- As a new employee, the explanation of why you are doing a specific task is not always explained well.

- Great working opportunity with NRCS.
- Haydee feels she has received great training opportunities and tools with NRCS.

Dale W. – Area 1 Guest Report

- Good to have DCs attend – improves communication.
- Email is not a good method for communication; although, it is quicker.
- Communication face-to-face with the AC and DC seems to be more effective.

Kelli M. – Area 4 Guest Report:

- Learned a lot in the meeting
- Especially like the information that DCs are going to approve modifications.

Allen G. – Closing Comments:

- NHQ is going to mandated us to reduce 1% overhead.
 - State and Area efficiency.
 - Allen is on the steering team and Cathee was selected as a facilitator.
 - Hard look at offices and other overhead costs.
 - Allen will visit with the local CDs that may be affected.

Adjourn at 3:25p